



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 210217-0022]

RTID 0648-XB065

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Eastern Aleutian district (EAI) of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI) by vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access sector fishery. This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2021 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific ocean perch in the EAI allocated to vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access sector fishery.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 10, 2021, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2021.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Allyson Olds, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Groundfish of the BSAI prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the BSAI FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 2021 TAC of Pacific ocean perch, in the EAI, allocated to vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access sector fishery was established as a directed fishing allowance of 742 metric tons by the final 2021 and 2022 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (86 FR 11449, February 25, 2021).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the EAI by vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access sector fishery. While this closure is effective, the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR part 679, which was issued pursuant to section 304(b), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there is good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment would be impracticable and contrary to the public interest, as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of Pacific ocean perch directed fishery in the EAI for vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access sector fishery. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of December 9, 2021.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: December 10, 2021.

Ngagne Jafnar Gueye,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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